

Toward Land Acknowledgement

This year First Parish will be engaged in a process of developing a land acknowledgement, a statement that recognizes that the land on which our congregation is located was stolen from the Indigenous people who first inhabited this area and our commitment to work for reparations, right relationship and justice in regard to Indigenous people. This is part of an ongoing process informed by the work of the Indigenous Justice Working Group, IJWG.

Beginning in the fall, the IJWG is planning sessions with the congregation about this topic -- defining a land acknowledgment, why is it important, what would we want ours to say? We would like to invite the First Parish community to participate in these discussions, for greater understanding and motivation to endorse the need for a land acknowledgment, as well as further repair and reparations work with local and national Indigenous peoples.

Below are two sample statements. One version was crafted by Rev. Erica and the other by Elizabeth Hunter, member of the IJWG and was shared in the summer service of Sept 2021.

Sample A:

The meetinghouse of First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Arlington resides on the ancestral land of the Massachusetts People, whose name was appropriated by this Commonwealth. We pay respect to the Massachusetts elders past and present. We recognize the Massachusetts People as traditional stewards of this land and we acknowledge the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. We admit the truth of violence perpetrated against the Indigenous Peoples of the land and make a commitment to uncovering that truth. We make this acknowledgment as part of building a culture of respect, truth, and accountability in our congregation, our community, and our nation.

--Elizabeth Hunter

Sample B:

We, the First Parish Unitarian Universalist congregation of Arlington, acknowledge that we are on the unceded lands of the Massachusetts Tribe. Our congregation's historical ancestors, white European settlers, seized these lands from indigenous people. We honor the bloodline of the Massachusetts people and commit to ongoing conversations of repair and reparations.

--Rev. Erica

As we begin this work, these samples and additional information will be shared with worship associates, ministers, and guest preachers, and folks will be asked to start incorporating a land acknowledgement using them (in some variety) in the opening words of our Sunday worship.

It is our hope that the congregation hearing different takes on this concept will lay fertile ground for the more formal IJWG conversations and creation of a specific Land Acknowledgement for our community. By the end of this program year the IJWG will incorporate input and propose a final version for the First Parish community to endorse and adopt.

Please contact the Indigenous Justice Working Group with questions- email at IJWG@firstparish.info